

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4304

July 5, 2011

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

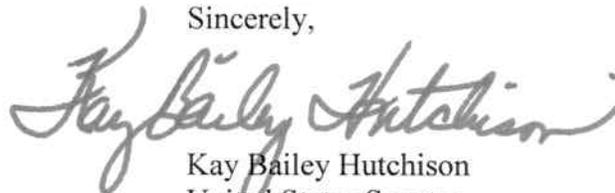
Dear Secretary Shinseki:

The National Cemeteries are an important way in which our nation shows gratitude for the service of its veterans. The ability to provide and oversee these sacred resting places for our veterans has been, and should remain, a crucial mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Since the first national veteran cemeteries were established in 1862 as resting places for soldiers killed during the battles of the Civil War, America has honored, with a dignified and proper burial, the men and women who've served our nation.

I am, therefore, greatly concerned by the complaints my office has received from veterans and their families that the Houston National Cemetery Director has forbidden the name of God or Jesus to be used during funeral services at the cemetery, even if the family wishes to do so. Our veterans swore to uphold the Constitution with their lives, and they and their families' religious freedom should be honored, not prohibited.

I am requesting that you look into this situation to determine if there are indeed any religious prohibitions or restrictions on speech or religious expression at the Houston National Cemetery. I would also ask that you determine if this situation is unique to the Houston Cemetery or if there are policies in place that might lead to religious prohibitions or restricted speech at other veteran cemeteries.

Sincerely,



Kay Bailey Hutchison  
United States Senator